AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1.   (Currently Amended)   A method of converting text to speech comprising:

receiving a list of textual units, where said textual units in the list comprise <u>root</u> words

<u>without any prefixes and suffixes</u>, prefixes <u>separate from the root words</u>, and suffixes <u>separate</u>

<u>from the root words</u>; and

for each textual unit in the list,

locating an associated speech sample in a memory; and

appending said associated speech sample to an output signal.

2.   (Original)   The method of claim 1 wherein one said textual unit in said list is

indicated as not having an associated speech sample in memory and said method further

comprises:

passing said indicated textual unit to a secondary text to speech engine;

receiving a speech sample converted from said indicated textual unit from said secondary

text to speech engine; and

appending said converted speech sample to said output signal.

3.   (Original)   The method of claim 2 wherein each said speech sample in said

memory comprises a processed recording of a voice talent and said secondary text to speech

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engine comprises a phonetic text to speech engine based on said voice talent.

4.   (Original)   The method of claim 1 wherein a consecutive plurality of said textual units in said list represent a whole word, said method further comprising:

for each textual unit in said consecutive plurality of said textual units, locating an associated speech sample in said memory;

creating a speech unit by splicing together said plurality of associated speech samples; and

appending said speech unit to said output signal.

5.   (Original)   The method of claim 4 further comprising, after said splicing, processing said speech unit to remove discontinuities.

6.   (Original)   A method of pre-processing a text file comprising:

receiving a text file;

parsing said text file into textual units, where each said parsed textual unit is one of a word, a prefix or a suffix; and

for each one of said parsed textual units, if said one of said parsed textual units corresponds to a stored textual unit in a vocabulary of textual units, adding said stored textual unit to a list.

7.   (Original)   The method of claim 6 further comprising, for each one of said parsed textual units, if said one of said parsed textual units does not correspond to one of said stored textual units,

marking said parsed textual unit as being out of vocabulary; and

adding said marked textual unit to said list.

8.   (Original)   The method of claim 7 where said marking comprises pre-pending a character to said textual unit.

9.   (Currently Amended)   A text to speech converter comprising:

means for receiving a list of textual units, where said textual units in the list comprise

root words without any prefixes and suffixes, prefixes separate from the root words, and suffixes

separate from the root words; and

for each textual unit in the list,

means for locating an associated speech sample in a memory; and

means for appending said associated speech sample to an output signal.

10.   (Currently Amended)   A text to speech converter comprising a processor

operable to:

receive a list of textual units, where said textual units in the list comprise root words

without any prefixes and suffixes, prefixes separate from the root words, and suffixes separate

from the root words; and

for each textual unit in the list,

locate an associated speech sample in a memory; and

append said associated speech sample to an output signal.

11.   (Currently Amended)   A computer readable medium for providing program control to a processor, said processor included in a text to speech converter, said computer readable medium adapting said processor to be operable to:

receive a list of textual units, where said textual units in the list comprise <u>root</u> words <u>without any prefixes and suffixes</u>, prefixes <u>separate from the root words</u>, and suffixes <u>separate from the root words</u>; and

for each textual unit in the list,

locate an associated speech sample in a memory; and

append said associated speech sample to an output signal.

12.   (Currently Amended)   A text to speech conversion system comprising:

a text file pre-processor operable to:

receive a text file;

parse said text file into textual units, where each said parsed textual unit is one of a word, a prefix or a suffix; and

for each one of said parsed textual units, if said one of said parsed textual units corresponds to a stored textual unit in a vocabulary of textual units, add said stored textual units to a list;

and a textual unit processor operable to:

receive said list of textual units, where said textual units in the list comprise root words without any prefixes and suffixes, prefixes separate from the root words, and suffixes separate from the root words;

for each textual unit in said list:

locate an associated speech sample in a memory; and

append said associated speech sample to an output signal.

13.   (Canceled).

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14.   (Currently Amended)   A data structure embodied on a computer readable medium and ~~including~~ comprising:

a field for a textual unit,

a field for a speech sample associated with said textual unit,

a field for a frequency of a first portion of the speech sample that exceeds an amplitude threshold, and

a field for a frequency of a last portion of the speech sample that exceeds the amplitude threshold,

wherein said textual unit is one of a root word without any prefixes and suffixes, a prefix separate from any root words, and a suffix separate from any root words, and

wherein a processor is capable of using the data structure to locate the associated speech sample associated with the textual unit and to use the associated speech sample to produce an output signal.

15.   (Previously Presented)   The data structure of claim 14 further comprising a field for a phoneme that said textual unit starts with, and a field for a phoneme that the textual unit ends with.

16.   (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 7 further comprising:

passing said marked textual unit to a secondary text to speech engine;

receiving a speech sample converted from said marked textual unit from said secondary text to speech engine; and

appending said converted speech sample to said output signal.

17.   (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 8 further comprising:

passing said marked textual unit to a secondary text to speech engine;

receiving a speech sample converted from said marked textual unit from said secondary text to speech engine; and

appending said converted speech sample to said output signal.

18.   (Previously Presented)   The text to speech conversion system of claim 12 wherein:

said pre-processor is further operable to:

for each one of said parsed textual units, if said one of said parsed textual units does not correspond to one of said stored textual units, marking said parsed textual unit as being out of vocabulary and add said marked textual unit to said list; and

said textual unit processor further comprises:

a secondary text to speech engine operable to receive said marked textual unit and convert said marked textual unit into a speech sample.

19.   (Previously Presented)   The data structure of Claim 14, further comprising at least one field for identifying:

an offset from a beginning of the speech sample to each zero crossing that follows a positive valued major peak in the first portion of the speech sample; and

an offset from an end of the speech sample to each zero crossing that follows a positive valued major peak in the last portion of the speech sample.

20.   (Previously Presented)   The data structure of Claim 19, further comprising at least one field for identifying one or more peak values associated with each zero crossing.